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MASTHEAD

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PRÉCIS

« I doubt that anyone went to a Bruce Thai movie because Bruce Thai was in it » (p. 2-3).

« You really are staying for the noise » (p. 4).

« Tong believes in God, whereas Mew believes in music » (p. 5-7).

« Jean Marc Ab-Sen » (p. 8-9).

« And, yes, John Hurt did perform in Alien » (p. 9-10).

« I can analyze images or sequences of images » (p. 11).

NOTES

Photography on the cover, page three and page seven courtesy of Felix Kalmenson.

The Innis Herald is usually published during the third full week of each month during the Fall and Winter terms. Meeting dates and deadlines may be found on our website.

All submissions are welcome.

That's Bruceploitation!

WHEN

Enter the Dragon (1973) grossed over \$100 million worldwide, the Hong Kong film industry had reason to celebrate. Hampered for years by low production values and bad scripts, Hong Kong had finally found a potential ticket to international box office success. Bruce Lee, a D-list Hollywood actor and martial artist who returned home to find fame and fortune, had become the colony's biggest box office attraction with three martial arts hits, and was finally on the verge of becoming the only international Asian superstar.

Too bad that Lee died just one month before *Enter the Dragon* was released – a regrettable career move by any standard.

But you can't keep a good icon down, and with increasing demand from foreign markets for kung fu product, Hong Kong movie producers – both high- and low-profile – began looking for any Chinese guy who could throw a few punches to become « the next Bruce Lee ». Actors with pseudonyms like Bruce Li, Bruce Lee, Dragon Lee, Bronson Lee, Bruce Chen, Bruce Lai, Bruce Lau, and Bruce Thai were thrown into Z-grade chop socky epics that shamelessly mimicked the small filmography of the late martial arts master.

Bruce Li's *Magnum Fist*, *The Blind Fist of Bruce*, *Bruce Lee vs. the Superman*, *Enter Three Dragons*, *Return of Fist of Fury*, *Enter the Game of Death*, *Dragon Lee vs. the Five Brothers*, and *Bruce Lee Versus Gay Power* were just a few of the films unleashed upon an unsuspecting public. Most of these films are now in public domain and widely available on DVD, usually with a picture of the real Bruce Lee on the box to trick gullible consumers. These films and dozens of others spawned the « Bruceploitation » movement, one of the strangest and most enduring of all exploitation subgenres.

The first Bruceploitation movies were wildly inaccurate Bruce Lee biographies, whose scripts were based mostly from hearsay and tabloid newspaper articles concentrating on the more lurid aspects of Lee's life. The earliest known Bruceploitation movie, *Bruce Lee: A Dragon Story* (1974), focused on Lee's alleged affair with bit-part actress Betty Ting Pei, but *Bruce Lee and I* (a.k.a. *The Sex Life of Bruce Lee*) (1975) trumped that film by actually starring Betty Ting Pei. *Bruce Lee: The Man, the Myth* (1976) was a much more chaste affair, and is well regarded in some circles for having been shot on three continents. Well, it's nice to see Bruce Li actually fighting at the Roman Coliseum instead of a cardboard cut-out, but it's clear the filmmakers never applied for filming permits, judging by the awkward scenes of characters standing outside the 20th Century Fox gates.

Every scrap of Bruce Lee footage was exploited. Episodes of *The Green Hornet*, a campy '60s show in which Lee played a sidekick, were edited into feature films with titles like *Fury of the Dragon* (1976). *Fist of Fear*, *Touch of Death* (1980) took footage from one of Lee's teenage movies and re-dubbed the soundtrack to turn it into a questionable Lee biography. A few scenes from Lee's

action-free childhood movies were stitched into *The Real Bruce Lee*, which was marketed as an *Enter the Dragon*-style fight-fest.

Game of Death (1978), the most widely seen Bruceploitation film, was allegedly based on a film that Lee was shooting at the time of his death, but director Robert Clouse discarded all but eleven minutes of Lee's footage and fabricated a new story about a martial arts actor who runs afoul of gangsters. Aside from one fight scene, the role credited to Bruce Lee was played entirely by stand-ins disguised under big sunglasses. The film, which is inexplicably included in Fox's official Bruce Lee DVD collection, hits its low point when it incorporates actual stock footage from Lee's funeral into the plot. I wonder what crossed Robert Clouse's mind when he chose to use a close-up of Lee's corpse.

Being a Bruce Lee clone must have been a pretty thankless task – I doubt that anyone went to a Bruce Thai movie because Bruce Thai was in it. Jackie Chan, whose first starring role was in the regrettable *New Fist of Fury* (1976), managed to escape the Bruceploitation ghetto by subverting its conventions in his kung fu comedies. Some less talented clones, especially Dragon Lee and Bruce Le, were evidently content to continue greasing their abs and thumbing their nose well into the '90s. (Le managed to parlay his minor celebrity into a directorial career, helming the well-reviewed soft porn movie *Comfort Women* and the not-terrible late-period Bruceploitation saga *Ninja Over the Great Wall*).

But inevitably others grew restless living under Lee's shadow. Poor Ho Chung-tao was lured into the movie industry when his resemblance to Lee gave him a chance to star in a string of low-budget movies. Unscrupulous producers changed his name to « Bruce Li », and Ho reluctantly played along, hoping Bruceploitation would be a stepping-stone to mainstream stardom. Unfortunately, « Bruce Li » stuck, and producers would always renege on promises to publicize Ho's real name. *Storming Attacks* (1978), a thriller that was meant to steer Ho away from Bruceploitation, was instead released under the nonsensical title *The Image of Bruce Lee*, with « Bruce Li » credited as the star.

The Image of Bruce Lee was one of many Bruceploitation films that were bald-faced scams, evoking Bruce Lee in the marketing but not in the actual movie. No scam was more bald-faced than *Bruce Lee Fights Back from the Grave* (1976). Originally titled *American Bangmungaeg*, this run-of-the-mill movie starred Jun Chong as a Korean martial arts master who travels to Los Angeles to find his best friend dead. Bumming around L.A., he eventually uncovers a crime world conspiracy.

Aquarius Releasing, a grindhouse distributor specializing in kung fu movies, acquired *The Stranger from Korea* for its American release,

and tacked on a thirty-second prologue in which lightning strikes the grave of Bruce Lee, and an actor playing Lee jumps and rises from the ground. Apart from the title and the bizarre opening sequence, the rest of the film was completely unchanged. Nevertheless, Aquarius' two-minute theatrical trailer announced that the plot involved Bruce Lee rising from the grave to fight « the Black Angel of Death ».

I had a chance to speak with Jun Chong a few years ago from his Tai Kwon Do school in Los Angeles. Chong was credited in the Aquarius version as « Bruce K.L. Lee ». « Oh, I wasn't happy about that, because I'm Jun Chong, he said. I tried to sue them, but, you know, it's tough to sue people ». Chong said that he couldn't remember much about filming this minor classic, but admitted, « It could have been better if it had more bigger construction and production ». Chong still occasionally dabbles in acting, most recently in a direct-to-video opus called *Maximum Cage Fighting* (2006), which scores 1.8 out of 10 on IMDb's user poll. (BLFBFTG, by contrast, rates 2.7).

Most Bruceploitation movies are too dull to have much fun with, but the subgenre hit its zenith with two amazing movies that defy any type of common sense explanation. *The Clones of Bruce Lee* (1977) and *The Dragon Lives Again* (1977) are, quite simply, two of the most astonishing films ever made, and I'm surprised that they haven't developed larger cult followings.

The Clones of Bruce Lee begins with Bruce Lee being rushed into the emergency room. Declared dead on arrival, the world goes into mourning (and the producers pad the running time with some of that infamous funeral footage), but a British scientist has used Bruce Lee's DNA to create three clones, played by Dragon Lee, Bruce Le, and Bruce Lai, a group of actors all who look kinda, sorta like Bruce Lee, but not much like each other. Colin puts them to work in the film industry, eventually planning to have them kill each other on camera. His plot fails, but not before we get to see the long-awaited Bruce Le/Dragon Lee fight scene.

The Clones of Bruce Lee eventually loses interest in the staggering implications of its premise and becomes a standard fight movie. Everyone seems to take the idea of human cloning pretty nonchalantly, not least the clones themselves. Still, it's weird fun, not least for the five-minute interlude where the clones find themselves on the beach watching a half dozen completely naked women play volleyball. This section doesn't avenge the plot, but I'm not one to complain.

The Dragon Lives Again is even better. The plot: after his death, Bruce Lee (Leung Siu-Lung, credited as Bruce Leong) finds himself in the Underworld, a purgatory ruled over by a tyrannical emperor. All is not well – a coup is being hatched by a bevy of pop culture icons, including

James Bond, Dracula, the Godfather, the Exorcist, Emmanuelle, Clint Eastwood, and Zatoichi – copyrights be damned! Bruce rubs these guys the wrong way, but quickly finds an ally in Popeye. The film's production values are as bad as any other Bruceploitation movie, but it has a goofy comic charm that elevates it above typical Z-grade fare. This is one of the rare Bruceploitation films where the makers seem to be in on the joke. Its surreal, cut-rate mis-en-scene and sly sense of humour give it an otherworldly quality. Who was behind this masterpiece?

Director Law Kei is clearly one of the unsung geniuses of exploitation cinema, and I'm happy to report that he's still active in the Bruceploitation business! According to IMDb, his most recent film was a *Fist of Fury* remake called *Juvenile Chen Zhen* (2004). I'm dead

serious when I say that it's time for a critical re-evaluation of his oeuvre. Come on, Cinematheque Ontario – give the Fassbinders and the Antonionis a rest and let Law Kei have a retrospective!

(Incidentally, Alexander Grand, who played James Bond, has all but disappeared, but I suspect he spends his time in the bars of Hong Kong, loudly proclaiming to anyone within earshot that HE, not Sean Connery or Daniel Craig, was the definitive 007).

Bruceploitation faded in the early '80s, but in the world of low budget and straight-to-video martial arts cinema, it has never completely died. In fact, the movement looks poised for a comeback. In 2006, director Rob Cohen announced that he was planning to resurrect Bruce Lee using digital effects for a

new action movie called *Rage and Fury*. Press releases claimed it would be the first time an actor would be digitally revived for a leading role, and promised that it would have been marketed as an all-new, honest-to-god Bruce Lee movie. While disagreements between Cohen and Lee's estate have stalled *Rage and Fury* for the time being, the abandoned film suggests a simultaneously enticing and disturbing new chapter of Bruceploitation. Could there be any better Bruce Lee clone than Bruce Lee himself? ☞

WILL SLOAN



To Here Knows When

MUCH has been made in recent months of the sixteen years that can now be labelled as My Bloody Valentine's break-up. Following the delayed release of their since canonized *Loveless*, the band struggled on a follow-up – the myriad reasons each conflicting with or simply raising the bizarreness of the last – before lead songwriter Kevin Shields' Sisyphusian methods toppled back down and the quartet split ways. Years ago, this space would typically be reserved to engage in the mythologization of what was occurring in and after this period, but as we've now grown accustomed to left-of-the-dial titans from this period reuniting – Dinosaur Jr., Pixies... even forefathers like Mission of Burma and, depending on when you tuned out, Wire – these hypothesizations formerly traded through mailing lists have become antiquated and the reunion has become a mere expectation for younger fans.

However, it is worth noting that throughout the period of relative inactivity, long-time fans' spirits had dropped so low that the possibility of a tour was long since abandoned, to say nothing of the potentially finished third album. The best that could be hoped for was a cash-in boxset remastering the albums and assembling their modest, though well dispersed secondary material. Thus, it came as a complete surprise when the mostly hermetic Shields announced the band's reunion and impending tour. For many people who had heard *Loveless* when the word pitchfork meant nothing more than a farming tool – or have heard *You Made Me Realise* – this reunion was a significant event. For these people the band's live show carried significant cache, by personal experience or word of mouth, comparable to the creation of the very music itself (released or otherwise).

It's this consideration of the relative popularity of My Bloody Valentine amassed during their path to making *Loveless*, the post-split mythologizing of the band and the more recent internet canonization that might explain the decision to hold the event at the Ricoh Coliseum. That is, it is possible that this is what led to the decision, though its not a sufficient explanation for the choice itself. Keep in mind that prior to tickets going on sale, fellow ex-shoegazers the Verve failed to sell out the same venue and they managed to chart two Top 20 Modern Rock singles in the United States just about a decade ago, while a lesser act like Swervedriver could only hope to fill Lee's Palace. Thus it was no surprise when shortly before the concert date the show was moved to the more appropriate middle-ground of the Kool Haus.

Shields' comment that he would reserve a tour for when he felt he had the technology adequate to best represent the band's richly layered sound in a live setting may go to explain the near \$50 price of admission. If pictures of his on-stage gear and the Front-of-House soundboards, lighting rigs and video projector are any indication, the

band weren't exactly skimming much off the top. Shields' multiple pedal boards are worthy of the term shoegaze; when poured out on the stage before set-up, it looks like a tornado had gone through a music store. Furthermore, there appeared to be at least three dedicated technicians manning the sound, lights and videos throughout the set – with recording gear to boot – and the video projector mounted onto scaffolding was about the size of a decent sized refrigerator.

Much like their recorded music, it is no single layer that is of interest, but the way in which they all weave together. If it was the ear-splitting volumes that resulted in most of the speculation prior to the show – be it through rumour or the security guards handing out free earplugs and stern words of advice at the door – it was the first flash of light that probably got the most attention for its unexpectedness. The lighting served to both compel and provoke through its alternation between aesthetic allure and eye-squinting brightness, thereby providing a sympathetic relationship with the music that never seemed gratuitous or inappropriate. Similar in execution was the projected video, although this seemed especially important considering the most widely-known image related to the band (and, through association, their music): the cover of *Loveless*. An abstracted image, over-saturated and filtered, could describe most of the videos shown, especially through their interplay with the lights.

While these are clearly enriching aspects of the experience, it would be no stretch to posit their presence as a replacement for any exaggerated physical performance. However, one of the more striking images of the band on stage is the juxtaposition of Shields and co-vocalist Belinda Butcher with the comparably manic rhythm section of Colm Ó Cíosáig and Debbie Googe, who are positioned between the two singers. Their movements especially reinforced how driving the band's music can be, regardless of style. It's here that the publicized volume comes into play, meeting all expectations on anthemic songs like « *Only Shallow* » while providing revelations in the recapitulation of the dance-oriented « *Soon* ». It is a testament to the band's ability when subtle variations in the sophisticated sonic structure of « *When You Sleep* » or « *Come in Alone* » present themselves, emphasizing that these songs are being performed. While it's riveting simply to hear the differences from the well-worn copies of the recorded versions, they also make you marvel at how much of the sound has been perfectly recreated.

It is concerning these shifts that the most notorious deviation must be discussed. Forty seconds in the original song, the « *noise* » bridge of « *You Made Me Realise* », the band's earliest indie anthem, has been increasingly let off its leash since its release in 1988. As of '89 it began to take up a few minutes, while on the *Loveless* tour the portion was stretched to five minutes. As talk and You-

Tube videos will attest, this too has been impacted in the intervening sixteen years. Now clocking in at fifteen to twenty minutes – whether word or watch can be trusted – the part variably known as « *The Holocaust* » or « *The Apocalypse* » has become a transcendental aural and physical experience. Said to include the sampling of an aircraft taking off, this must be one of the most consistently loud noises experienced at the Kool Haus this side of a Sonic Youth show. As a document of noise, the band creates a worthwhile piece, built on shifting rhythms, subtle oscillations and an overall composition that harkens back to the original portion of the song and benefits from the relationship with the lights and video. Yet it is its placement both within a song released as a single and furthermore within the context of a My Bloody Valentine show that this takes on its importance. Unfortunately discussed as an endurance test, that is exactly what the context provokes from a sizable portion of its audience as the only « *reward* » is the brief conclusion of the song that follows. You really are staying for the noise. Noise is certainly not a foreign aspect to the band's aesthetic, though, and is especially prominent in the set's two final, violent tracks: « *Feed Me With Your Kiss* » and the aforementioned, end-of-times « *You Made Me Realise* ». That the concluding song's extended sojourn takes on such significance in discussions of the live show suggests that for many fans, My Bloody Valentine is either the full extent with which noise music is ever typically undertaken, or, slightly more confounding, that it was unexpected from the band prior to the show. This speaks to My Bloody Valentine's lasting credit: the ability to marry pop and noise in such a way that when taking the latter aspect of the group's aesthetic to its logical extreme, a good portion of the audience will be caught completely off-guard.

In this sense, My Bloody Valentine managed to meet the difficult task of surmounting the weight of sixteen years and providing a show that lived up to its (however marginalized and obscure) event status – offering ample points of consideration for both long-term fans and those acquainted through the modern canonization that is a 5-star allmusic.com review. That the latter (and their head-hanging girlfriends) might have walked away having to consider the conception of a sustained, stomach-shaking, scowling cacophony for the first time almost makes it a humanitarian mission. If we can look forward to a recorded album that leans more to the Mission of Burma side of this indie-reunion trend rather than the Pixies, they might accomplish what as recently as a year ago seemed impossible: a rebirth, but one that's also seamless and worthwhile. ☐

CHRIS HERON

The Love of Siam

TONG

decides to give Mew a Christmas gift piece by piece by way of a treasure hunt in an omnipresent backdrop of rural Thailand, while Mew gathers all the pieces except for the one hidden in the tree. The tree is cut down before Mew can retrieve that last piece. In this sequence, minutes into Thai director Chookiat Sakveerakul's three-hour opus, *Rak Haeng Siam* – or *The Love of Siam* (2007), the major themes are simply and elegantly made clear. Not unlike the photos appearing throughout the film, the film as a whole is a portrait of family, friends, and love surrounding the lives of two boys, Tong (Mario Maurer) and Mew (Witwisit Hiranyawongkul). While Mew keeps the incomplete toy, the film explores how we are affected by losses, what sustains our hope, and how we deal with certain consequences. The loss of the last piece spurs an aesthetic discovery in Mew in the form of friendship with Tong. By thoughtfully imbuing such thematic concerns at every level—character, story, and mise en scène—Sakveerakul has effectively crafted a work that achieves a level of profundity rarely seen in cinema.

Siam brought Sakveerakul the Best Director award across Thailand's film awards; the film has also won several Best Picture awards and has been celebrated equally by both mainstream and highbrow critics. The Bangkok Post called *Siam* « groundbreaking » and stated that it is an important film in contemporary Thai society. The National also praised it as a « brilliantly conceived » film. Moreover, *Siam* received commercial success throughout Thailand; even without the marketing power of a major studio, *Siam* is the type of film that exists under the radar of the International Awards while simultaneously emphasizing how all of the Best Picture nominees pale in comparison. Its appeal on all levels lies in its eminently accessible, yet controversial subject matter, sophisticated aesthetic approach, and formidable directorial prowess.

Siam eludes any summarization by means of the multi-layered plotline. Mew, the lead singer of a boy band called August, has writer's block and is seeking to write a song about « love ». He bumps into his childhood best friend Tong, whom he has not seen in nearly 5 years and who now has a needy, demanding girlfriend named Donut. They instantly rekindle their past friendship, which results in many interesting, long-lost feelings; Mew is then able to write a love song. In the meantime, Mew's new band manager June bears a striking resemblance to Tong's missing sister Tang. Korn, Tong's father, is worn down by the disappearance of Tang over 5 years ago and the monotonous routine of drinking. Sunee, Tong's mother, does not know how to provide solace for the family. After meeting June, Tong and Sunee devise a plan to hire June to pretend she is Tang in hopes that it will pull Korn out of his alcoholic depression.

The film involves a plethora of unique, stunning scenes and events: the opening Christmas play, the closing Christmas concert, a gay romance, a funeral, a supernatural returning, and a slew of voodoo-oriented curses. Despite the potential for interpreting these events as merely melodramatic,

the supreme restraint in Sakveerakul's presentation gives the film a naturalistic, contemplative tone throughout.

One of the more engaging long-takes that Sakveerakul presents in the film involves a reflective, imagistic representation of the loneliness and solipsistic nature of individual lives; this entails the scene where Mew is walking alone on the street during the holidays, this sadness is then found in Donut, who is walking by him with another boy while she keeps looking back nervously. Then the camera pans around to reveal Tong, who is laughing with a group of friends, though he is all alone and just as unhappy. Each character's story intersects with the others through their shared loneliness, as none find themselves with their ideal partner.

Sakveerakul grounds a fantastic story with the richness of everyday life. This occurs by means of the way he does not dramatize the (re)entry of June/Tang as she quietly walks in the background in the office, which is seemingly unimportant at first. After Korn is admitted to the hospital, he wakes up and sees a tiny bug inside a glass. In a single shot, Sakveerakul perfectly catches the tone of Korn's post-operational exhaustion and his will to live which is represented by the bug slowly crawling out of the glass. Moreover, when Mew, in a perfectly framed overhead shot, confides in Tong about his loneliness over the years, Tong tenderly edges Mew into his arms as Mew places his head on Tong's chest. This echoes an earlier scene when young Mew comforts young Tong on the same bed after the latter's sister has gone missing. The way this instinctual, affectionate gesture is performed could only occur between two people who have had a deep, penetrating history together, the compassion between a lonely boy and a damaged boy.

Sakveerakul's emphasis upon the richness of everyday life also extends beyond the main characters. Every character, no matter how peripheral they are, exhibits a realness that is visually and thematically sobering: the female neighbour Ying imparts her impossible love for Mew; the superficial friends who make fun of Tong's religion, sexuality and family; the guitarist Aex who desperately tries to accept and reconnect with Mew; a brash music producer who reports that the only popular songs these days are all love songs, and the affable grandmother who stays at home waiting for her husband to return and tells Mew that music is the only way to show how much you care for someone. Regardless of these brief minor character appearances throughout the film, each individual, idiosyncratic presence exists as a fully-developed, indelible entity. Moreover, each story line exists independently and has the capacity to fully captivate the audience – take for instance Sakveerakul's presentation of Ying's provocative storyline.

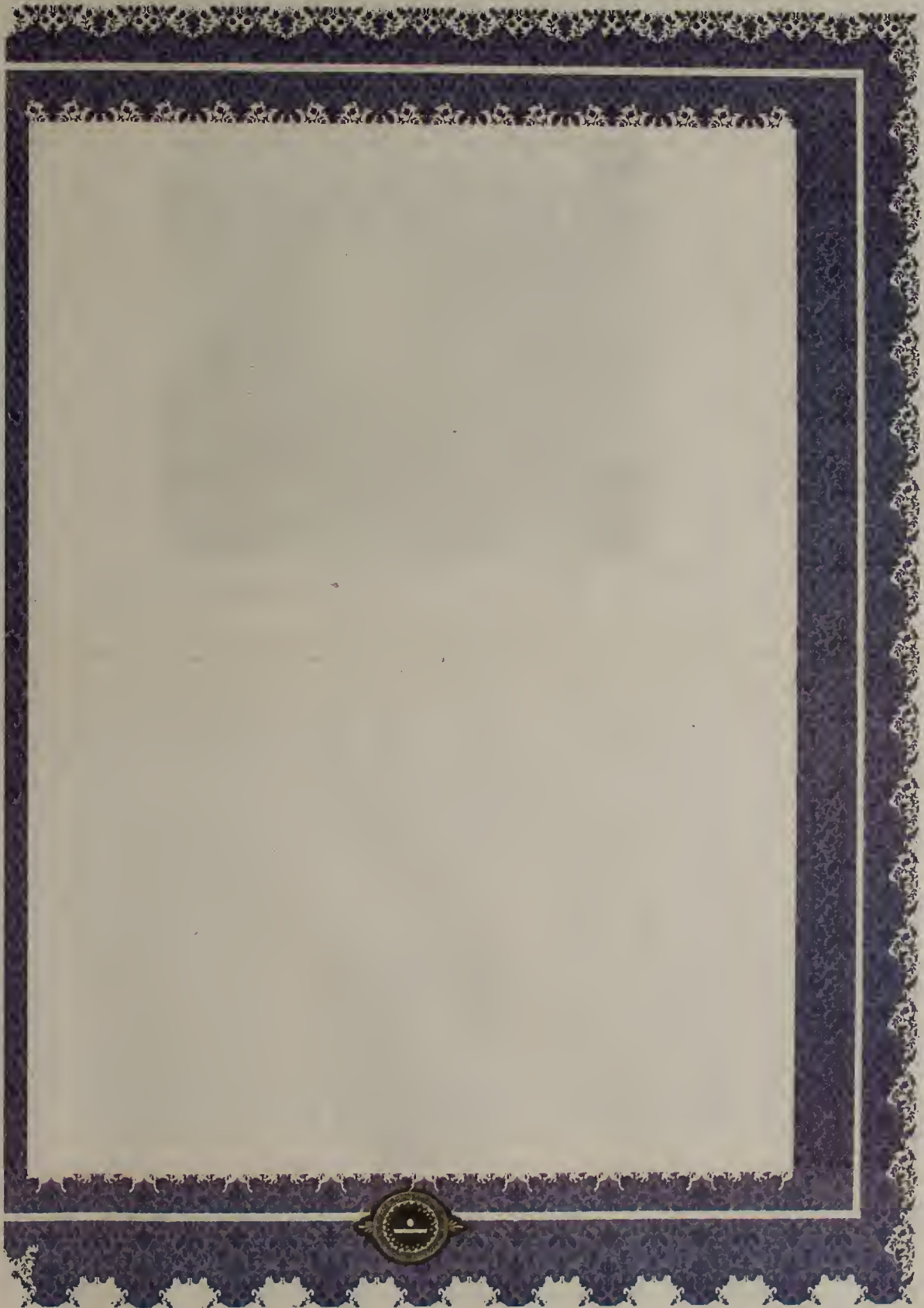
This richness points to an expansive world at the edges of all our personal narratives. It seeps in every once in a while – i.e. the notion that everyone has experienced some personal loss. These people are all victims who suffer from losses: Tong lost his sister to the jungles, his father to alcohol, and Mew to the relocation of the family. His mother Sunee attempts to avoid any

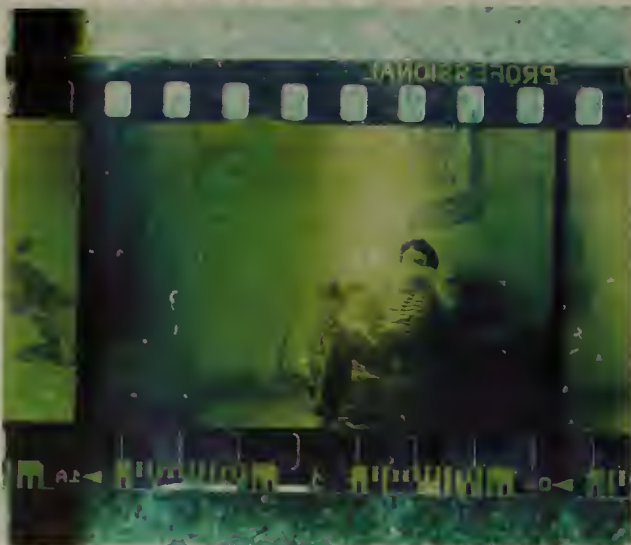
further losses in the family after Tang's disappearance by extending her overwhelming care to Tong (e.g. by picking him up everyday and calling him) and preventing Tong from seeing Mew, a relationship that is fundamentally opposed to Sunee's intentions. As well, June lost her parents to an accident without knowing until she returned home, never able to make them proud. Conversely, Mew lost his only family—his grandma – but he holds onto his memories with Tong (e.g. photo, gift) in hopes to prepare for their ultimate reunion in the film. Interestingly enough, another instance of loss involves the fact that after the reunion between Mew and Tong, Mew loses his ability to sing. The impact of loss is strong and subsequently imposes itself upon the characters by forcing them to address the following question: « how will you make it from now on ? ».

Sakveerakul uses photos frequently in the film to (re)introduce important concepts. Mew finds his hat underneath Ying's bed along with many of his other photos; it is not until then that he realizes he has a secret admirer. June looks through all the photos of her look-alike (Tang) with Korn, reconstructing historical narratives that are otherwise taboo in the family. This is because Sunee has hidden all the photos with Tang in it, pretending she never existed; however, one day Korn asks her, « Why is Tang not in the picture ? »; this results in Sunee replacing the picture with a scenery of hills, which Korn violently destroys. Photos are peppered all throughout *Siam*: the photo of the grandparents on top of the piano, Tong's family albums, the photo of Mew with his bandmates, and the photo of Mew and Tong, and truly demonstrate Sakveerakul's stylistic genius.

In *Siam*, Sakveerakul both indicts the ruthlessness of a familial downfall and pokes fun at tradition. We see the effects of the former in the principles that Sunee must sacrifice to support the family and to cope with her guilt for losing her daughter. In relation to the latter, the characters' reliance on superstition has mixed results. Tong believes in God, whereas Mew believes in music. Tong prays consistently every night that his sister would come back, but it never happens. When June first enters the family, she has to lead the prayer, but instead she makes up the prayer and fools Korn. Ying has followed the instruction in the spellbook in order to make Mew fall in love with her but she embarrasses herself when she finds out the truth about Mew, and then she is out of magic and out of luck, but more importantly, out of love.

The lack of communication sets up the divisions between what the characters know and do not know, and also shows that the world is a much bigger picture than any one perspective can fully understand. Korn's life is consumed by his consistent drinking and delusional mindset—i.e. that Tang has never really disappeared. Korn and Sunee rarely talk to each other—they do not even sleep in the same room—until Sunee confronts him and says, « You don't know what is happening in this family ». In the end, Korn reconciles with Sunee, saying, « I know. I've always known ». Ying is « blind » in love with Mew but she keeps it to herself. We never know much about June's real





identity because we do not know when she is telling the truth or simply appropriating and re-telling movie plot lines. She is an ethereal character that indiscreetly walks into their lives, makes a change, and then disappears. But unlike Tang, June's actions are for the better.

The pertinent gay theme, which emerges throughout the movie, also inhibits perfect communication. The scene when Aex performs CPR on Mew and Mew accidentally puts his tongue into Aex's mouth leads to the breakdown of their friendship. When Aex wants to reconcile and accept Mew, Mew still does not tell him the truth until Aex tells him, « *Why do you think no one cares about you?* ». Homosexuality is also another taboo in Tong's family, especially in relation to the Christian context. Often, when both main characters are questioned about their sexuality, they hesitate, which makes existing problems worse. It is not until Tong subtly comes out to his mother when they decorate the Christmas tree, and breaks up with Donut when he hears Mew's singing, that he can finally be honest to his family, to Mew, and to himself.

The use of cell phone and text messaging in *Siam* reflects our reliance on technology to communicate nowadays, like Donut does, but it is still far away from the intimacy established in Tong's note for Mew, « *You are sound asleep in my arms. I don't want to wake you* », or Mew's songs that are composed especially for Tong. Music then becomes their connection and Mew's mode of expression. Mew is unafraid of displaying his affection for Tong publicly, as he listens to Tong's call during rehearsal and talks in a sweet voice. Their communication is pure and innocent, which evokes the not uncommon human desire for interpersonal simplicity.

Once Ying translates the lyrical line for Mew – « *As long as you love, you will still have hope* » – a level of understanding is reached. This

also demonstrates how the characters' lives reflect one another, as they remain hopeful despite being haunted by their individual losses. For example, Mew's current situation also mirrors his grandmother's old one: both stay in the same house for their lovers to return and use music to show their love. When Korn falls into depression, Sunce still cares for him and hopes that he will return from alcoholism to her one day. This may be why June/Tang leaves the family, because she hopes for something to change within the familial context during her absence; moreover, the losses throughout the film may actually produce a greater sense of hope for the future, or as she puts it, « *Life always gives us an opportunity to start over* ». Even though loss is inevitable, the characters never seem to give up hope: Ying helps Tong to retrieve the piece of the gift and leads him onto the stage at the Christmas concert, she does all this because she still loves Mew: « *Let go, but don't give up* ». And Mew and Tong are constantly united and separated throughout, but finally they find each other towards the end of the film.

How can we deal with the feeling of loss? June/Tang leaves the family again but this time she comes up with an answer: « *You can make it because you have so much love for one another* ». The inter-title in the end reveals the very same notion: « *To all the Loves that Bring us to Life* ». Although a loss may seriously and deeply affect our consciousness, it is through this loss that we truly understand our love for each other, and this is when something new can be generated. For instance, the second time when June leaves the family, Tong and his mother finally recognized that Tang is gone and they are the only ones left to take care of each other. Through love, we can fill up the absence and enable our recovering process. Therefore, even when Tong and Mew are not together, it does not mean they do not love each other because their love is translatable, communicable,

and subvertible from the ideology of loss into an entirely different, but more positive meaning of hope—i.e. the hope for one another.

If our losses often make life miserable, *Siam* also suggests the delight in hoping for something new through an absence; this is what makes life interesting. Our perspectives are forever changing. Indifference separates us, while hope bonds everyone together. Tong returns and gives Mew the missing piece in the end after all the years, and this gift bears much more significance because of the action behind it, and Mew himself finally overcomes his loneliness and embraces the love he has by positively answering his earlier question, « *Is it possible that we can love someone and never be afraid of losing them?* ».

Siam is all about balancing the pursuit of the losses and the hope for discovery, and how difficult modern urban life makes that quest. Moreover, the film delves into how once we find them we can be satisfied by the mere fact of attempting a life of hopefulness along with how love can overcome painful loss and lead us to happiness. The last image of the film is the completed wooden toy. This Christmas present means a true return of Tong, a reciprocal figure for his feeling towards Mew, which becomes his symbol of love, and subsequently suggests the notion that Mew's life is finally completed with Tong. The film closes on Christmas day, which ties in with both Tong's religious beliefs and Mew's musical faith, and not only celebrates the birth of Jesus, but also the success of the boys' wishes, and the beginning of their budding love, signifying both hope and loss in the current Thai society. None of these characters can be found in the last image, or could it even mean—another treasure hunt? ☺

CARSON CHOW



Mary-Jo's Bannocks

« Right gents, em, could yez n' huv brought yer aivin' mither wae us ? Do this daecent wumman some guid tae lave us althegither ».

« Crivens! Whit's thae mettir wae ye ? An' suffer'er company amang ye aa ? A doug's wey it is wae nae mair peace an quiet I reckon ! »

« C'maan now Charlie, go fetch yir mither, thit's a guid lad ».

« Whit wad I nae hae gien tae hae haed it spoken true mair often ! »

« Whit's be speakin' ay Gaz ? Hae haed whit spoken true ? »

« Soup Kitchen Andy, m-mister Armstrong, 'e wuz sayin' - »

« Isna recommendit, it behoves ye little tae go doon thit road agane ».

« Thaur's buggir-aw wrang for a wee yin tae fetch 'is sickly mither onie mair than it is tae finish whit he started ».

« A right, a right. Let thae bairn finish 'is story. Nivir dae onybody ony hern ».

« S-Sae thaur wae were mister Armstrong; ma mither, uncle Gary, ma faither, walkin' up St Cuthbert, whaur who should we see but s-skinny-malinkie Sandy an' er auld fren, squat Mary-Jo Morrison. Now Mary-Jo's bin boardin' thae airmal bannock, tho how I kenned it I cannae say; 'twas as if oot o thae heavens above thae Lord He heps sort ye oot, pointin' oot a grumple wbin He sees yin. Mind thae gap, 'ye cud hear 'im almost say, She's in it! an thae flair she wae skailin' flakes about toon like Pava turned heels-over-gourdie. Thae tuith wae kenned by juist about aw thae lads from Castle dykes tae - »

« Hoots boy! Thae point sonny, an ye cud spare me thae beuk-lairmin' ! »

« Oi now Ivor! It's thit kind ay tone thit can dirf thae tacketts o a polisman's butts ! »

« Soem Mary-Jo's luggin' thae bannock thae airmish thae thooms an' weent thae bosoms - »

« Slow'er down Charlie-boy. An auld fella cannae keep up ! »

« Awfy sorry m-mister Armstrong. Sae ma mither, right, she goes tae Mary-Jo, 'elp ma Boab Mary-Jo, but 'tis a braw unyirthly smell about ye this mornin; whit ye 'ave thaur ? 'othin' missus Kelly, she replied. It cannae be nothin' Mary-Jo, thaur be a bonny bulge 'twoud seem about ye bosom. Wee mair or wee less than afore, tho I cannae recall. Yere slightly aff the plumb too. Meanwhile, ye see, the het bannocks' scaldin' Mary-Jo's bosom an' she's a-forgettin' her manners right quickly. Cheerio missus Kelly, back hame I be needed. Eftir that, Mummikins calls, Whaur do ye think ye twa are goan? I'm nae so auld a gowk thit I cannae spot an auld ploy nae mairther how well conceived! Ye think biryin yer heid like a turtle will hide thae risin' steam blawin in thae wind? Whata wey ye go, ye huv thae blaeface about ye ».

« Shair wey tae get caught, follae in yer instincts ».

« Thae het bannocks' givin' Mary-Jo a real reason tae get a move on, thae pair 'wbeengin' saul. Quickly now Mary-Jo, yer sloppin' ow're! Gie us a taste. Get yer bannocks o'yer ain ye youky carline ! Ma mither lunges at pair Mary-Jo, but thaur be nae het bannocks by thae bosom. They've stid further doon. C'moan then ! yells Mary-Jo, I'll mak siccar I beat ye keechless for thit ! »

« Har-har! She dinnae say thit ! »

« Mary-Jo, she sacks ma mither in thae cul-lage. Oof ye fucken cunt ! Thit's smarts ! »

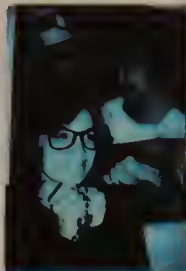
« Michty me ! Whit a felly ! O-kay Charlie-boy, enough o this wbeent o'blethers. Yer nae wey convincin' nae mair ».

« Nubn-uhn mister Armstrong. Wait 'til ye bear mair ! Thae colliershangie only gets better ! Cude kens it does! Upon castin' things up, ma mither reckons a swift blow tae Mary-Jo's big-beid will do'er some guid. But juist then, Soup Kitchen Andy comes 'atween thae fracas, yellin', Ach, you daft wumman! Leggo a Mary-Jo! Those be nae het bannocks! They be Mary-Jo's ajce, anvil-shaped breechts ! 'Sad off ye tajersome auld balton ! An wham-bam-thank-ye-ma'am, Mary-Jo and ma auld mummer both sock Andy in thae eras for 'is jaloozing an' 'e goes doon like a ton o bricks. Mary-Jo starts tae keechle an lach, but 'it's nae long afore mither is at it agane wae thae valiauk youth, tho this time she's goat a square piece ay bannock in'er mouth, juttin' straight oot frae Mary-Jo's bosom. A nearly pancocked lachin wae Mary-Jo's bannocks lyin' 'vrywbaur oan thae flair, 'er nakkyt breechts peekin' oot, wampish airms a-sluggin' ».

« Well then, bollocks to Mary-Jo's bannocks if she cannae be bothered tae share ! »

One could vividly imagine the curious state of perplexion that Mary-Jo Morrison stumbled into when there clasped between her spindly fingers of almost uniform length flapped in the westward wind the unsigned monograph on which rested the source of her most recent and time-consuming apprehensions; a reception for which conspiring forces of the Unknown could cast their accounts with Impunity, roll their loaded dice behind spirited whistling, and precipitate the perils of a thousand thundercracks lashing the earth's hide from the penumbral distance; such was the degree the architects of Mary-Jo's discomfiture remained enshrouded by impenetrable mystery. Alack-the-heavy-day! that as sole bearer of burdens thus conferred, poor hungry and homely Mary-Jo Morrison was reduced in her corruptible state of dependency to the designs of the base-born; that, or to the truly peccant machinations of the Co-Conspirator. Who could hate so sweet and loveable a creature as quaint Ms. Morrison, with her rosy-red chollers and uncommonly alacrity nose for trouble? Nudge and nuzzle it would, to the apodictic tune of the buzzing rate of convictions; where many by way of pardon had pledged on gargantuan snoot a solemn oath of ponderous reformation:

If I were a shake
Wud ye be thae pull
Thit solemly swears
Tae unravel thae wool?



Wud 'twere sae
Thit 'twas thae case
For ye tae relapse
Are shot in thae face.

It was not a question she often permitted to ask of herself, though today proved to be a pertinacious exception. She imagined in the days to come having bound, gagged, and chained to the furnace of her mother's basement the perpetrators of the salacious document, their clothes tucked away into some far-reaching orifice as she explored her limits of language on their ruddy flesh. She saw herself in her mother's gimp suit, the rights to which Mary-Jo thought fit to bear claim to after having suffered on several occasions; hidden in an armoire; crouched behind a radiator, usually resulting from a failed attempt to look for cigarettes; and leading into the hands of an obliging ignorance loath to acknowledge the likelihood that it was indeed cognizance of her presence that further emancipated her mother from the staid social mores underpinning their lives; testaments to the sexual deviancy of the suburban housewife; frolicking about the room trailing a chain of paperclips in her leather-slick hands, asking, « Jings men ! Do ye huv enough rope thair ? »

But Mary-Jo having been tasked with the guardianship of an inestimable reputation bordering on sainthood; the eyes of her regarding public seeking the reassurance only a model of rectitude could instill; what few alternatives of inspiration afforded to the hardy citizens of Kirkcudbright wearing alarmingly thin; she quickly cast such thoughts out of sight; and out of mind. The degradation pursuant to any sort of realization; any failed exertion to trebate the collapsing weight of temptation; of such idle reveries; would mar her heretofore comportment with shades of hypocrisy that would dog her into her teenage years. Absorbed in a revisited consultation with her taxing standards of virtue; though more concerned with the details of the attacks on her person; she failed but for a moment to register the localized nature of the illiterate jeremiad: Soup Kitchen/Grease-whistle Andy, Charlie and Janie Kelly; and Sandy Babington; amongst others, it should be recalled; were all mentioned by name.

Yet it made little sense for Mary-Jo to suspect any of the characters mentioned in « Mary-Jo's Bannocks », her intuition told her; all existed within her contracted sphere of influence as comrades and peers; whose guarantee of friendship was sufficiently buttressed against imperilment and unarticulated misgivings. She did not doubt the penurious measure of her attackers' imaginations; the assurance of such an assessment; if not proffered by their monomaniacal obsession with debasement; then by the photoperiodism of their methodology; casting the threatening light of suspicion over Mary-Jo's unostentatious magnanimity; and amidst both friend and foe; affirmed Mary-Jo's conviction that the interrogation of an ally would be but a waste of time; such was the quality of her much envied association. And though her enemies verged on the infinite, Mary-Jo effervesced at the prospect of drawing up a list of profligate ne'er do wells; with whom serious consideration of their culpability could be assessed with discriminating exactitude.

Vinnie Poppins
Robbie "Facily" Evans
Ellemenaella Van Zandt

Lucinda Vonk
Djordje Mantrios

Wilhemina Adjani
The Syphilitic Sundays
Leonie Loverly

Emery Baggot
Luca Mercury

incarcerated
incarcerated
whereabouts
unknown
wraith
higher dimensional
being
allegedly reformed
incarcerated
whereabouts
unknown
incarcerated
whereabouts
unknown

Karol Lanchester
Bart Grant
Bria Ardley
The Legion of Unabashed
Businessmen
Edmunda Crelley
Linda McKinnon
Arp Frappé
Mick Xideo
S.E.H.

Kingdom of the Stoat
Raymonde Cuesta

in exile
allegedly reformed
incarcerated
active
active
allegedly reformed
dating mummikins
active
whereabouts
unknown
trapped in 2nd
dimension
active

The Rio Grande active

So floor not fair reader at the injustices perpetrated against the do-gooder!

Even luminaries of Kirkcubright Academy; shining emblems of just and propitious action; experience the carping torment of ridicule!

Tread softly over her guarded feelings! Do but consider for a moment, that the Wrath of the Wronged is not to be taken lightly!

JEAN MARC AH-SEN

**fedora, jacket, and whip not included*

SINCE last appearing on the big screen 19 years ago in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, one of cinema's most recognized, admired, and compelling heroes, the whip-cracking daredevil archeologist Indiana Jones, returns to excite and engage audiences across the world in *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*, a highly-anticipated blockbuster that had been in plans for nearly a decade. Director Steven Spielberg, executive producer George Lucas, star Harrison Ford, and many other returning performers and motion picture talent were all part of this project once again. Although I mentioned that Indiana Jones, this time around, is here to excite and engage us, he simultaneously manages to confuse and frustrate us. Spielberg's film is fun to watch and maintains a superior production value, but it's far removed from the previous films in both aura and quality. This review contains spoilers.

The film takes Indy (Ford) on a quest to find a bizarre, magnetic « *Crystal Skull* » and return it to its resting place in a lost city in the Amazons. He is aided by Mutt Williams (Shia LaBeouf), a 1950s greaser Brando-wannabe who initially propels Indy into this quest. Mutt is later found to be the son of the familiar Marion Ravenwood (Karen Allen) as well as Indy's own son (I guess Indy and Marion got it on right after they left the Capitol Building at the end of *Raiders*), but only after we find out that his stepfather was a guy called Williams, who died during WWII and whose parenting role was taken over by Professor Oxley (John Hurt), seen in the film as a babbling psychotic obsessed with the *Crystal Skull*. Indy is also aided, then hindered, then aided again, then hindered again by Mac (Ray Winstone), a supposed pal of Indy's from the war days. And what about Indy's enemies? Well, the main ones are a group of Soviets headed by Irina Spalko (Cate Blanchett), a KGB operative and apparent specialist in « psychic warfare » (treated as an interest of the late Stalin in what is actually less believable than Hitler's obsession with religious artifacts and the occult in *Raiders* and *Last Crusade*). Although previous films took Indiana Jones to South America, the Himalayas, North Africa, a Greek island, East Asia, South Asia, Venice, and the Middle East, Indy's locality in this one goes merely from Nevada to New England to Peru and back. In Peru, Indy and Mutt first proceed to a dungeon prison where they find more clues in Ox's prison cell and then go to a burial ground where they, after fighting off a group of monkey-like native guardians, find the *Crystal Skull* itself.

Thereafter, Indy and Mutt are captured by Irina and her cronies and are taken to the Ama-

zon River. What follows is some further « elucidation » concerning the *Crystal Skull* whereby Irina claims that it, and whatever it entails, was brought to Earth by extra-terrestrials (and to make her point, she provides us with a glimpse of a dead Roswell-like alien). After meeting up with Marion and Ox, the four of them escape in what becomes an action-packed chase through the rainforest, past the man-eating ants (almost definitely digitally-rendered, unlike the real snakes, bugs, and rats used in the production of the earlier films), and down three waterfalls until the lost city is reached. After entering the place (this time with Mac, who now claims he's on Indy's side), the group meets some bloodthirsty Mayan leftovers from *Apocalypse* and unlocks a passage leading to the chamber that sets the scene for the film's climax. There, with Irina and some of her Soviet comrades, the *Crystal Skull* is returned to its « body » (one of several in the chamber). This activates a mechanism that shakes and rumbles the whole place while opening a portal into another dimension. Indy, Mutt (aka Henry Jones III), Marion, and Ox escape (Mac, greedy after the precious loot nearby, suffers an appropriate fate much like Elsa Schneider had in *Last Crusade*) while Irina gazes into the eyes of the *Crystal Skull* in order to gain knowledge about everything. The bodies come alive and merge into a single extra-terrestrial form that thrusts so much info into Irina that it ultimately blows her into smithereens. The whole structure turns out to be a flying saucer that launches out into space. Indy, Mutt, Marion, and Ox have a chat on top of a hill while resting. The film proceeds to a scene of Stanforth (Jim Broadbent), the dean of Marshall College, preparing Indy's new office - i.e. for the assistant dean - likely a move in order to make amends for having fired the famed archaeologist due to suspicions of Communist sympathies. *Crystal Skull* concludes with the marriage of Indy to Marion at a church.

There are many positive sides to the fourth Indiana Jones film. Most importantly, it's a fun and thrilling flick to watch, especially when compared to the formulaic superhero and action movies that never seem to stop pouring into theatres nowadays. Moreover, no one can deny that the plot itself, although highly convoluted, is quite unique. An interesting part of the film is its countless references to the previous Indiana Jones films, other films made by Spielberg and Lucas, and cinema in general. *Crystal Skull* pays homage, of course, to the 1950s B-movie much like the earlier films were modern versions of the 1930s serials. Some of Indy's lines (« it's not as easy as it used to be ») clearly recall his earlier adventures, as does the

reappearance of Marion, the locality of Marshall College, photos of Marcus Brody (the late Denholm Elliott) and Professor Henry Jones (Sean Connery, initially rumored to be, but eventually not, casted), and the setting of the opening scene in a recognizable giant warehouse full of locked crates (one of which sustains enough damage to reveal the Ark of the Covenant inside).

As well, the opening scene in which a pack of teenagers speed in a hot rod alongside a convoy of what appear to be U.S. army trucks and listen to Elvis' « *Hound Dog* » recalls both the car-and-music culture of Lucas' 1973 film *American Graffiti* and the heavy militarization in, among others, Spielberg's 1977 film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Ironically, RCA's discontent with Universal's financial proposal led to the absence of any Elvis songs in *American Graffiti* - but Lucas got his way this time. An even more subtle reference is the brief shot of the teenagers' car being reflected in the chrome of a hubcap, Spielberg's likely tribute to Lucas's stylistic tradition of reflecting cars and other vehicles on polished chrome in what began with his 1966 USC student film *Herbie*. Among other cinematic references, as film students, scholars, and enthusiasts may note, is the sign for « *Atomic Cafe* » when the army convoy makes a turn for the secret military base at the beginning of the film. This references the documentary *The Atomic Cafe* (which compiled newsreel footage and instructional films to suggest how 1950s American culture reacted to the proliferation of nuclear weapons) in an identical maneuver to that in the 1985 film *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*.

From a stylistic point of view, there is much to be commended in the film as well. Several, but not all, of the sets are nicely crafted to evoke the appropriate mood, evident in the spooky burial ground. Editing, by Spielberg collaborator and Indiana Jones veteran Michael Kahn, is terrific and well-paced as usual. The sound was of supreme quality, which can be expected from sound designer Ben Burt and the other geniuses at Skywalker Sound. Perhaps the best stylistic element of the film is the cinematography by Janusz Kaminski, Spielberg's consistent choice of DP since *Schindler's List*. It would be no easy task to light and shoot the film as amazingly as Douglas Slocombe had done on the three earlier films. Although the impression that Kaminski evokes is different than Slocombe's, it is not necessarily worse. At times, particularly during the sequence when Indy and Mutt find the *Crystal Skull* in the burial ground, the photography feels much like a contemporary television series.

Nevertheless, *Crystal Skull* has many

flaws, which add up not only because of filmic flaws but also because of Indy-specific blunders. The preceding paragraph noted some of the characteristics that Spielberg and his collaborators « chase wisely » but there are many others that they « chase poorly ». On the stylistic level, Spielberg claims to have resisted any attempts to use digital effects, but the film proves otherwise. From the A-bomb explosion to the high-speed truck chase through the Amazon rainforest to the man-eating ants to the obscure alien spaceship at the end, audiences get heavy-handed effects from ILM along the lines of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* films or a previous Spielberg blockbuster, *War of the Worlds*. This greatly reduces *Crystal Skull* to a mish-mash of CGI and prevents audiences from empathizing with the characters or sufficiently experiencing the situations. After all, those 1950s B-movies had far from any digital effects, so why even bother? Well, because Lucas and Spielberg (as much as I do admire the both of them) have some hypocritical tendencies. I was also left disappointed with the near absence of the Wilhelm Scream, a unique sound effect that Ben Burtt perfected and that became iconic to the *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* films. The only instance where I detected it (and only in part) was in the scene at the Marshall College library, when a nerd screams as Mutt and Indy on a motorcycle head straight toward him. Maybe Burtt included it when a Russian or two were blown away, but I must have missed it. One of my gravest frustrations with the film is with the lack of a recognizable piece of theme music, specific to *Crystal Skull*. If one may recall, *Raiders* not only introduced the famous Raiders March, but it also gave us that other miraculous theme whenever the Ark appeared onscreen. Similarly, *Temple of Doom* featured such melodies as « Short Round's Theme », the Temple of Doom sacrifice chant, and the « Slave Children's Crusade ». Finally, *Last Crusade* included that somber and gallant medieval-like theme song that played in some scenes featured Henry Jones and towards the end of the film. Yet *Crystal Skull* had no such film-specific theme song. The prequel *Star Wars* films, on the other hand, all had original theme songs. If 65-year-old Harrison Ford can crack whips, then I'm sure 76-year-old John Williams could have cracked up a fresh and original theme song.

Although the acting and character portrayal was satisfactory, it had holes and scratches that could have been patched up. Harrison Ford, despite his age, proved that he could kick some butt. However, I felt that less attention was given to him than in the earlier films. His entrance in the film was much less dramatic (taken out of a car trunk and held at gunpoint) and more delayed than seen before. Later in the narrative, the camera seemed to stray away from Indy and over to Mutt. Plus, the film has few funny or compelling lines. The only one I remember from this fourth installment is « I like Ike! ». As for Shia's character, it was quite evident that he would be revealed as Indy's son and the link between Mary and Marion was also foreseeable. I wonder what the film would have been like if all those other rumors had been realized (Natalie Portman as Indy's daughter or Kevin Costner as Indy's brother). Shia's acting was erratic at times and he didn't seem fully comfortable in the role of a 1950s greaser. Let's face it, the young actor doesn't have what it takes to replicate Brando, Fonzie, or Danny Zuko. His presence in 1957, especially in a calm college town, feels more

like Marty McFly arriving in the Hill Valley of 1955 in *Back to the Future*.

Moreover, Mac's role is highly confusing as he constantly switches from being Indy's ally to being his foe, becoming downright irritating. If Spielberg, Lucas, and writer David Koepp wanted to make Mac more psychologically complex, they could have done a lot of other more effective things. Irina's character is a tad artificial (next to Blanchett's imperfect Russian accent that is nowhere nearly as mastered as Paul Freeman's French accent and Ronald Lacey's German one in *Raiders* or Julian Glover's American voice in *Last Crusade*). She seems more like a villain from a Japanese comic book while sporting a haircut and attitude that seems to have sprung straight out of a Quentin Tarantino picture. Perhaps Spielberg and Lucas have exhausted themselves to the point where they have no more energy left to seek out talented unknowns and, instead, opt to cast unsuitable celebrities. John Hurt, a fine actor, is tremendous as Professor Oxley. The character of Ox is humorous enough, but frankly is odd to the point that we wish he wasn't there at all. And, yes, John Hurt did perform in *Alien* - there was some sort of motivation in casting actors for *Crystal Skull* who had experience with films about extra-terrestrial life. It's unfortunate that Sean Connery could not have returned to play the role of Indy's dad. Apparently, Henry Jones died, which makes little sense given the fact that he drank from the Holy Grail, granting him immortality at the end of *Last Crusade*. Spielberg and Lucas might claim that the Grail's power didn't apply past that seal or that it wasn't really all that, but then why does Walter Donovan rapidly age into a rotting corpse or why does water from the Grail heal Henry Jones' gunshot wound? Either way, this represents yet another break of this fourth installment from the earlier films.

The opening of *Crystal Skull* plunges us directly into the action of the main plot, but leaves us as confused as Indy in terms of what our hero is doing at a U.S. military coropound in Nevada with a group of Soviets and what exactly it is that they all look for and find (i.e. more than merely « that magnetic mummy »). Sure, this leaves us anticipating more and provides surprise later on, when it is revealed that the mummy was a dead alien. Nevertheless, I believe that the opening should have had less to do with the main plot, as with the previous installments (which, perhaps, would have been impossible due to the already dense and complex nature of the storyline). All Indiana Jones films should follow the same basic pattern. The ending was even more abysmal. Indy getting married to Marion? Personally, I would have much rather seen Mutt remain as a bastard. Although the ending is happy and upbeat (I give Spielberg and Lucas credit for that), it's not the dramatic and terrific ending that should have ended our beloved film series. Indy's onscreen legacy should have concluded with a bang! Unless, of course, a fifth installment is produced. What's next? *Indiana Jones and the Perils of Marriage?*

The film's plot has many flaws, principally because it's too complicated and, frankly, boring. I previously mentioned that it would have greatly benefited *Crystal Skull* if the film had encompassed more localities, spread out across the world (remember that the Cold War was indeed a global phenomenon). Filming supposedly only took place in the USA because Spielberg didn't

want to spend too much time away from his family (even though, about two years earlier, he had filmed *Munich* all over Europe). Whereas interiors for *Crystal Skull* were shot in Hollywood, all the previous films had studio shooting done at Elstree Studios in England (which gave them a unique and amazing aesthetic quality). As for Indy's enemies in *Crystal Skull*, the use of Soviets as bad guys is fantastic. With the exception of the James Bond movies, it is too infrequent in films (likely attributable to the persistent leftist sympathies of most talent in Hollywood). But this strategy is treated somewhat carelessly and poorly by Spielberg. What I mean to say is that we don't get a sense of the « evilness » of these Soviets as we did with the Nazis in two of the previous Indiana Jones films (recall that ultra-sadistic Toht in *Raiders*). Irina is bad, but one could still invite her for dinner.

The greatest fallacy with the film's plot, including the greatest concern I have with it, is the entire extra-terrestrial component. It's a perfect sign that Scientology has taken over Tinseltown. Yes, Spielberg does have an obsession with aliens and other dimensions, and I bet that, in the unfeasible circumstance that the film would have been made without Ford, he would cast his favorite Tom Cruise as Indy. I understand that Spielberg and Lucas were going for that 1950s B-movie feel, but the Ark of the Covenant, the Sankara stones, and the Holy Grail were much more feasible and in-line with earthly religious beliefs. The alien plot was pointless and just plain silly. Although, more broadly, portals between dimensions have been used before in the Indiana Jones universe, they have never been packaged together with aliens. Whereas all three of the earlier films concerned themselves with the important relationship between man and God, *Crystal Skull* chooses to involve itself in the bizarre and ambiguous possibility of man's encounter with extra-terrestrial life. On the whole, the plot is highly confusing. Just try to make sense of what the heck Indy is talking about with Mutt at the professor's home!

Concerning the title of this review, the « fedora, jacket, and whip » can be understood as a symbol for the aura and quality of the original *Indiana Jones* trilogy. Although *Crystal Skull* literally includes Indy's fedora, jacket, and whip, it essentially leaves out their « symbolic » meaning to fans and general movie-goers. Nevertheless, using *Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* as part of the fourth installment's title is, in fact, highly appropriate. The Indiana Jones franchise is like a kingdom, encompassing not only the films, but also television shows, video games, books, action figures, and much more. Over the years, its cinematic perfection has become as durable and valued as crystal material. Yet, at the same time, the Indiana Jones film series was brought to an upright death in 1989 with its remains being preserved in the realms of fandom and home video. However, Spielberg and Lucas apparently misconceived that the film series had been mummified in order to be reopened at a later time. Don't get me wrong here, because I myself strongly anticipated Indy IV for many years. Plus, note that *Crystal Skull* is a good film. Most of my points of discontent are with the film as an Indiana Jones flick and with its extra-terrestrial plot. As a movie-goer, I clapped, but as an Indiana Jones fan, I frowned. ☹

TOM NOWAK

Visual Affect in Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth*: Part II


IN response to this complication, defamiliarization will be specifically addressed in the context of modality in *JC*, which alleviates—or at least quarantines—the aforementioned dissonance; this rather vague resolution will be better elucidated vis à vis my later analysis, however, suffice to say it involves scrutinizing low modality images that are presented in unfamiliar ways. As well, I will also address the aforementioned « slowed down » diagrammatic layouts and detail in relation to defamiliarization proper; the latter point is less directed towards an analysis of the « slowness » of the « indigestible blocks of tiny type » and more directed towards Ware's detail-driven tendencies, which Wolk underscores in relation to a Ware copy-cat (Ivan Brunetti): « Ware still has it all over his acolytes, though, in part because of his unmatched, fanatical control and attention to detail—he makes it obvious how much sweat he pours into his comics » (Wolk 351). Now that the above complication has been appropriately addressed it is time to turn to Wolk's chapter on Ware in order to elucidate my contention.

Wolk begins his chapter by stating that « Chris Ware's work has an emotional range of one note, and he sings it at the top of his lungs, with gusto if not exactly pride » (Wolk 347, italics added); this is qualified when he notes how « Ware forces his readers to watch his characters sicken and die slowly, torment (and be humiliated in turn by) their broken families, and lead lives of failure and loneliness » (347). In response to this emotional-driven morbidity, however, Wolk states that the intense, emotional sentiment of *JC* is « rendered in a style whose manically precise, composed frostiness (every line either perfectly straight or perfectly curved) counterbalances the story's emotional brutality

» (347–48, italics added). I would like to pick up on Wolk's intimation that Ware's style curbs the « emotional brutality » experienced by the interactive participants in relation to *JC* because this observation is closely associated with the image-emotion relationship discussed earlier. More specifically, I want to expand upon this particular thread by arguing that certain images or sequences of images in *JC* « speak directly to the emotions » because the interactive participants are visually affected vis à vis the micro and macro levels of Ware's style. Moreover, many—if not all—of these particular visual instances can be characterized by one or more of the following four notions: the grotesque, the surreal, the sublime, and the pathetic (i.e. pathos). These four categories are beneficial because they help to identify and describe what is occurring visually and how the images and sequences of images affect the interactive participants; however, they are not always applicable, which is not necessarily an issue because at a fundamental level I am simply arguing that the techniques that Ware implements impact the visual affect, the emotive capacity of the images and sequences of images in *JC*. Before delving into an analysis of *JC* I have two important qualifications to posit in relation to my argument. Firstly, I would like to differentiate between emotions conveyed and emotions experienced because I am focusing more on the latter; however, these two ideas are not mutually exclusive—i.e. they frequently work in tandem. For instance, in relation to the notion of pathos in *JC*, the way in which Ware conveys certain emotions influences the emotions experienced by the interactive participants.

Secondly, it is important to note that it is next to impossible to objectively identify exactly

what emotions are experienced by the interactive participants in relation to certain visual instances in *JC*; however, I can analyze images or sequences of images that use certain techniques related to the comics medium or other principles of visual rhetoric (or both) and argue that because of these techniques, the images or sequences of images are more visually striking and salient, and thus emotionally provocative.

The catalyst that lead to an analysis of the image-emotion relationship in Ware's *JC* is based on my initial reading of it insofar as I was sincerely shocked by some of the scenes in the graphic novel and wanted to probe and understand why and how this happened. The scenes that I decided to analyze, then, are based on many—if not all—of the images or sequences of images that I found visually astonishing; these include: the Super-Man scene, four dream sequences, the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition scenes, and the genealogical-diagrammatic layout scenes. I will be addressing each one of these visual instances; however, I will be providing an extensive analysis of the Super-Man scene in order to provide a very thorough examination of one segment in *JC*, which will assist with exemplifying my contention. Moreover, my rationale for selecting this scene and subjecting it to a methodical analysis is based on a bias: the Super-Man scene was the scene that I was most visually affected by. I do believe, however, that my bias does not hinder the analysis of this scene; rather, it helps it because it is important to have some form of pre-cognitive reaction that constitutes the foundation of a discussion of the image-emotion relationship in *JC*. 

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